

# Ayn Rand

## The Myth:

She hated the poor.

## The Truth:



**DEBUNKED**

On Colbert report segment Stephen Colbert implies that Rand hated the poor by quoting a passage from her novel *Atlas Shrugged* where she seemingly calls them moochers and looters.

If he had taken the time to actually read *Atlas Shrugged* he would know that this reference was not directed at the poor. In *Atlas* for instance there are both rich heroes (Hank Rearden, Francisco D'Anconia) and non-rich heroes (John Galt, Quentin Daniels), as well as rich moochers and looters (James Taggart, Orren Boyle) and non-rich moochers (the Starnes heirs). It is the left that divides up the world into "the rich" and "everybody else." Rand doesn't think in those terms.

In one of her essays Rand writes, "It is not the degree of a man's ability nor the scale of his work that is ethically relevant here, but the fullest and most purposeful use of his mind." (*Ethics in Our Time* in *Madison, Wisconsin*, on February 9, 1961.)

The primary evil characters in *Atlas Shrugged* referenced as moochers and looters were executives that grow rich not by out competing but by getting subsidies and other special favors from the government. This is also prevalent in her non-fiction. "It was business, not labor, that initiated the policy of government intervention in the economy." (Mike Wallace interview).

In another segment Colbert implies that the following passage by John Galt, a hero in the novel, is directed at the poor. "You have nothing to offer us. We do not need you." But if you read the actual novel, you will discover that Galt has called on rich and poor alike, and that these words of his are in fact not addressed to the poor.



# Ayn Rand

## The Myth:

She was a fan of a child serial killer named William Hickman.



**DEBUNKED**

## The Truth:

If you actually read her personal journal entries on Hickman you can quickly see that she didn't actually admire him, but was just writing down some of her personal musings on an aspect of his personality that she thought might be useful for her writing project, "The Little Street". At that time she was only 23 and would later abandon this project. But here are her journal entries on Hickman.

"There is a lot that is purposelessly, senselessly horrible about him. But that does not interest me. I want to remember his actions and characteristics that will be useful for the boy in my story." -Ayn Rand Journals-

"My hero is very far from him, of course. The outside of Hickman, but not the inside. Much deeper and much more. A Hickman with a purpose. And without the degeneracy. It is more exact to say that the model is not Hickman, but what Hickman suggested to me." -Ayn Rand Journals-

Her only interest in Hickman was his unconventional attitude and the public's reaction to it. She was clearly morally against the crime he committed. All throughout her books is the moral requirement that an individual never initiate force against another.



# Ayn Rand

## The Myth:

She disapproved of charity.



## The Truth:

**DEBUNKED**

She was not against helping others. "There is nothing wrong in helping other people, if and when they are worthy of the help and you can afford to help them." -Ayn Rand- Playboy, March 1964.

She was also not against accepting help. "It is not immoral to offer or to accept voluntary, non-sacrificial assistance." -Ayn Rand- The Objectivist, June 1966, 6.

"What she was against was extortion and force. "She was against the support of some men by the extorted incomes of others." -Government Financing in a Free Society by Ayn Rand-

I would also note that she was herself charitable and regularly helped people in need. It is often forgotten that right after the war, when the Japanese were released from the concentration camps and racism was high, that Ayn basically put an entire family on her pay. The family had lost their business thanks to FDR's incarceration plans. Ayn hired the woman to do cooking. She already had a cook and the woman's daughter said her mother was not a good cook. Ayn hired her anyway. The husband was hired to help do the gardening on the property. The daughter, a high school student, was paid as a secretary, even though the film studio would provide Rand with secretarial services. In addition Ayn gave all three of them, plus a younger brother, lodging in her home. This was during a time when she also feed and housed a former teacher from Russia who was a war refugee.

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# Ayn Rand

## The Myth:

If it wasn't for receiving Medicare benefits Ayn Rand would have gone broke paying for her healthcare bills when she got lung cancer.



**DEBUNKED**

## The Truth:

Even though receiving restitution for forced payments into programs like Medicare and Social Security was entirely consistent with her philosophy, Ayn Rand originally did not want to sign up for them. Pryor, Ayn Rand's attorney had to argue with her because Ayn did not want Social Security or Medicare. What Pryor said was that she tried to convince Rand to sign up and they argued. -100 voices Oral History of Ayn Rand-

As far as the known record, we know that Ayn Rand and her husband between the years of 1974 and 1982 collected 14,000 dollars of social security benefits. How much benefits did they get from Medicare? None, or at least there is no record currently of them getting any benefits. Pryor says Rand was never involved in signing up for any of the benefits other than to sign the power of attorney. There is no indication whether Pryor used the power of attorney to apply for Medicare benefits, or whether Rand knew about it. There is no indication that such benefits were ever used. There is simply no evidence to show Rand ever looked to receive Medicare when she might have needed it, or that she ever received a cent.

Rand also had sufficient resources to cover the health issues she faced. In fact, she had sufficient funds to pay for heart surgery for her brother-in-law from Russia. Whether Rand also had some type of health insurance is currently unknown.



# Ayn Rand

## The Myth:

Ayn Rand violated her own philosophy  
by collecting social security

## The Truth:

**DEBUNKED**



Like all of us, Ayn Rand was forced to pay into social security when she started earning an income. Ayn Rand considered such payments as theft through extortion. As any victim of theft, you do not violate your principles by putting in a claim for partial repayment.

Ayn Rand made it clear that what she thought was immoral was specifically the act of supporting welfare programs, not the act of receiving repayments. "There is no such thing as the right of the government to seize the property of some men for the unearned benefit of others—the advocates and supporters of the welfare state are morally guilty of robbing their opponents, and the fact that the robbery is legalized makes it morally worse, not better. The victims do not have to add self-inflicted martyrdom to the injury done to them by others; they do not have to let the looters profit doubly, by letting them distribute the money exclusively to the parasites who clamored for it. Whenever the welfare-state laws offer them some small restitution, the victims should take it..." -Ayn Rand- The Objectivist, June, 1966, 11. Ayn Rand did not support these welfare programs, however she was a victim of them, and so she stayed consistent to her principles by taking repayments when they were offered to her.

"The same moral principles and considerations apply to the issue of accepting social security, It is obvious, in such cases, that a man receives his own money which was taken from him by force, directly and specifically, without his consent, against his own choice. Those who advocated such laws are morally guilty, since they assumed the "right" to force employers and unwilling co-workers. But the victims, who opposed such laws, have a clear right to any refund of their own money—and they would not advance the cause of freedom if they left their money, unclaimed, for the benefit of the welfare-state administration." -Ayn Rand- The Objectivist, June, 1966, 11.



# Ayn Rand



## The Myth:

She died of lung cancer, alone and miserable in a hotel room.

## The Truth:

**MYTH BUSTED**

Ayn Rand died on March 6, 1982, in her New York City apartment. Ayn Rand died of heart failure. She was buried in Kensico Cemetery in Valhalla, N.Y., next to her husband Frank O'Connor (who died in 1979). As to her being alone and miserable, Leonard Peikoff described her final hours in a talk at Boston's Ford Hall Forum. (See "To the Reader," by Harry Binswanger, The Objectivist Forum, Vol. 3, No. 1.)

"Ayn Rand did NOT die "alone and bitter." I know, I was among her best friends at the end of her life. She was working on a screenplay for Atlas Shrugged, until she got very ill (heart disease) and died 6 weeks later. She planned to produce the movie herself and move to Hollywood to get it done (she lived at 120 E. 34th St. in NYC). She held the same philosophy up to the end, and had the same love of life as the fictional heroes she created.

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